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THE GREAT RIVER



THE GREAT RIVER

POEMS AND PICTURES



BY

FREDERICK OAKES SYLVESTER

CHICAGO
1911


PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

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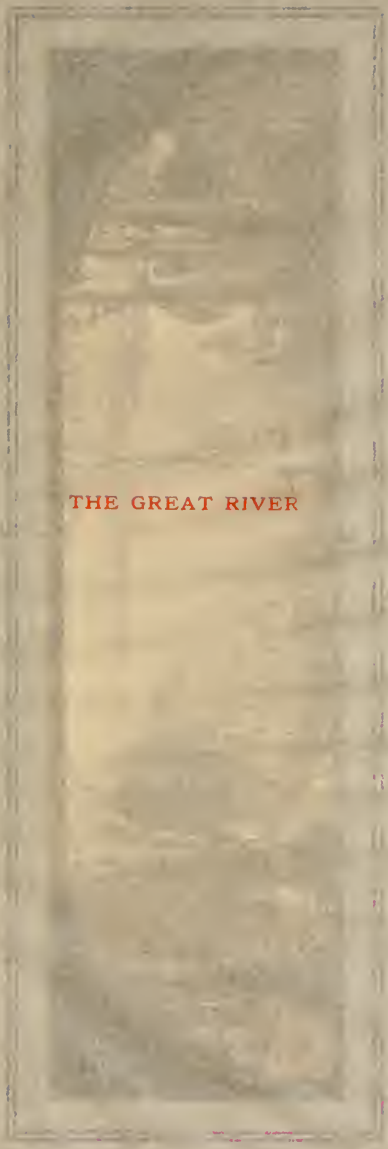
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O river, river, never yet
Was half your glory sung;
And never skill of painter's brush
Nor praise of poet's tongue
Shall half reveal the majesty,
The charm, the primal grace
That clothe you and attend your ways
And shine from out your face.


THE GREAT RIVER

THE GREAT RIVER



THE GREAT RIVER



Y the red man's grave and the ancient trail,
By cabin and camp I glide.
Dark pines o'er which the eagles sail
Stand guardians at my side.
In a cradle of gentle hills I wake,
I nurse and sleep on the breast of a lake—
And when my first full leap I take,
I tremble in my pride.

By the fields of wheat and the fields of corn,
By forest and isles I flow.
Now shadowed by dusk, now mirror of morn,
Far down to the sea I go.
I join the mirth of a thousand rills
That laugh in the meadows and dance on the hills,
My song the path of the springtime thrills
And the tide of the pathless snow.

By the great gray cliffs and the prairies wide,
By valley and farm I speed.
Fair Heaven I clasp, a willing bride,
To my ocean home to lead;
Her garments of gold and azure light
I fashion anew in our onward flight,
I double the jewels she wears at night,
Her every mood I heed.

By the fiery kilns and the noisy marts,
By city and town I race,
The smiles and tears of a million hearts
Are mirrored in my face;
The kiss and the curse, the sob and the song,
The cry of the weak and the shout of the strong—
I gather them all as I hurry along,
And scatter them all apace.

By the deep bayou and the broad lagoon,
By the ranch and the range I roll;

The silver sheen of the southern moon
I offer the sea as toll.
I throw the delta gateways wide
In my rush to the deep, and, side by side
And hand in hand with the welcoming tide
I reach my journey's goal.


THE FATHER'S SMILE

THE FATHER'S SMILE



THE FATHER'S SMILE



HE river, they claim, is turbid
and dark,
The river is grimed and gray,
But I have seen a crown of
gold
On its head at close of day.

And I have seen a silver seal
Aglow upon its breast,
A silver seal with the grace of Him
Who clothes the East and West.

And I have seen a royal robe
Agleam from hem to hem
With all the crystal loveliness
Of jewel and of gem.

And I have heard a secret sound
As the river flows along,
That seems above the twilight hills,
The river's evening song.

And I have caught a wondrous light—
Methinks I see it yet,
A wonder-light whose wistfulness
One never can forget.

For it is filled with mystery,
Yet full of joy the while,
And I have loved to think of it
As the mighty Father's smile.

THE FATHER OF WATERS



ES, I have painted you
In every mood—
When sunshine woo'd
Your smile and filtered through
Your being; when
The world of men,
Within the hive, nor knew
Nor understood,
Feigning brotherhood,
How into love our friendship grew.

We know each other well;
We laughed and sang
Together; pang
Of passion felt; the spell
Of languor, rage;
The open page
Of peace have known, and swell
Of life when Spring's
Warm flood-tide brings
The roses back to hill and dell.

Childhood and youth in me
And strength of years,
Sunshine and tears,
With these in you agree.
Something each feels
In each reveals
Oneness with Infinity;
Yet each, intact,
Owns power to act,
Free being and identity.



THEN, IF EVER, COME PERFECT DAYS

THEN, IF EVER, COME PERFECT DAYS





HAVE come back, my river,
I have returned to you.
In my journeys, far and near,
I have found no stream your peer,
Nor found your equal in the whole
world through.

I have come back, my river,
I have delayed too long;
But the notes of other streams,
That have murmured in my dreams,
Have hushed their voices in your great home
song.

I have come back, my river,
No more we two shall part,
For I love the length of you—
And the breadth and strength of you—
And all your wealth of wonder fills my heart.

ELSAH



NOW ye the hills of Elsah
That range by the river's side,
Where quaint, old-fashioned houses
Behind the fir trees hide?

Know ye the vales of Elsah
That run from the water's edge,
With shady pathways leading
Upward to cliff and ledge?

Know ye the life of Elsah,
Elsah asleep by the stream,
With trembling lips that murmur
The World's name in her dream?

Time was—when the years were younger—
That Elsah was half a bride,
And the World, that is ever a bridegroom,
Lingered and sang at her side.

But the song that thrilled her bosom
And the rose that graced her hair
Are things of the past, forgotten
By the singer who placed them there.


WHAT THE EYES OF ELSAH SEE

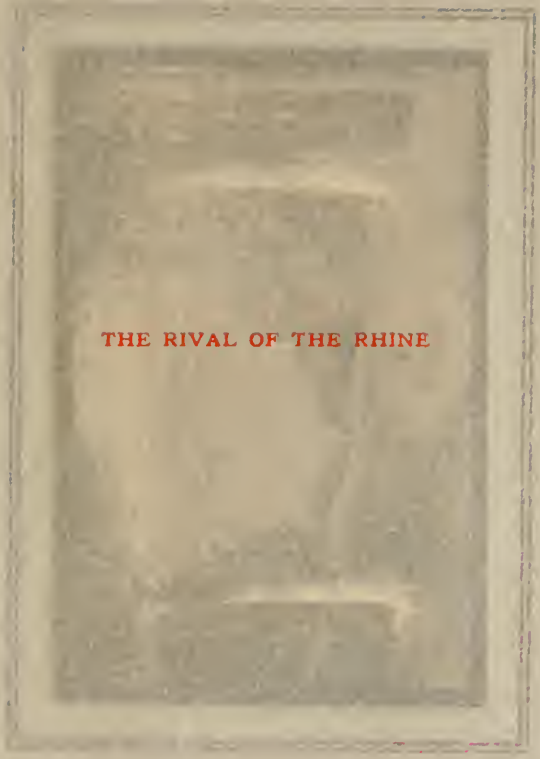
WHAT THE EYES OF ELSAH SEE



THE GLORY OF THE HILLS



HERE is a glory of the Elsah hills
That shall forever win my songs of praise.
Have I not felt it countless nights and days?
Is it a little thing when wonder fills
The soul and one's whole being wakes and thrills
To beauty? 'Tis my wont to gaze and gaze,
Spellbound, above the three great waterways
That gladden the eyes of Elsah as she wills.
Adown the sun-bathed slopes and through the trees
As far as vision goes the mighty streams
Mirror the sky, while field and grove and space
Mingle and merge in tender harmonies
That change the life of Elsah into dreams
And radiate a glory round her face.


THE RIVAL OF THE RHINE

THE RIVAL OF THE RHINE



ELSAH



HE sits between the hills to East
and West
And bends her graceful arms along
the stream;
Her eyes are focused far, as eyes
that seem
To look beyond, yet glow with vague unrest;
Her hair falls gently round her virgin breast
And through its folds her snowy bosoms
gleam—
From outward beauty one would surely deem
That she with all the river's gifts was blessed.
And so she was and is, and yet, alas!
A fatal thing she nourishes, for lo!
She gives an alien child her breasts to nurse,
Whose lips are iron and whose heart is brass,
And, dreaming, does not realize nor know
Its very touch a menace is and curse.



ND art thou smiling, Elsah,
And dost thou sing a song,
Nor know the World—that woo'd
thee once—
Now worketh thee a wrong?

Thy gifts and garlands gladly
Thou gavest years ago,
The fruits of thy goodly harvesting,
The wine of thy heart's deep glow;

But the World was restless and roving
And lightly valued thy gifts,
For the will of the World is wayward grown,
And often its fancy drifts;

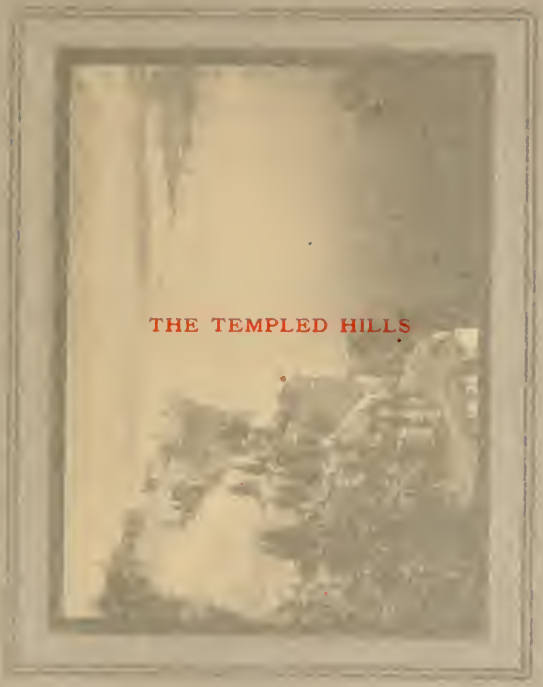
Drifts and forever wanders,
Seeking the strange and new,
For never a time in the life of the World
Has the love of the World proved true.

And the voice that sounds as music,
And the touch that seems caress,
Will crash as lightning through thy heart
And mock thy nakedness.

Yea, naught of thy virgin glory
The lust of the World will spare—
Till thou shalt hide thy breast for shame
In the folds of thy matted hair.

O spirit of living beauty,
Ere this be Elsah's fate,
May the tide of the mighty stream of streams
Unbar its ancient gate

And bear the form of Elsah
To its home within the deep,
To the arms of the ocean and lap of the sea
In one eternal sleep!


THE TEMPLED HILLS

THE TEMPLED HILLS



THE SONG OF THE HILLS



AVE I not lived at Elsah,
And climbed the Elsah hills
And stood aloft on Elsah's cliffs
And felt, with heart-deep thrills,
The glory of the sunset,
The purple Grafton heights,
The Mississippi's burnished gold
Aglow with a million lights?

Have I not watched the twilight
Cradle the land in dreams,
And seen the shadows lull to sleep
The eyes of the wakeful streams?
The earth-red chief, Missouri,
Restless, unfettered and wild,
The Illinois, a maiden fair,
Half woman and half child?

Have I not oft kept vigil
With star and moon and morn,
And heard the Father's chantings join

In the sunrise chant of the corn;
Or caught the song the wheatfields
Sing to the summer skies;
Known Spring's young touch and Autumn's
charm
When the haze o'er the lowland lies?

Have I not felt the vastness
And primal sense of things
Stir my whole being into deep
Eternal questionings;
Yea, thrilled with joy and wonder,
As thought to vision grew,
And found a beauty more complete
Than the outward senses view?

Then speak not of the cities
Where men with men contend,
And man, God-like, divinely made,
Men do not comprehend;

Where sense views sense-inventions
And credits itself alone,
Where man-made men beget in belief
Children they call their own.

But speak, if you can, of a city
Which cherishes Nature's gifts,
And the chaff of envy and hatred and strife
From the wheat of holiness sifts;
Where thought sees deeper than seeming,
Seeking an infinite Cause;
Where self blocks none of the streets with greed,
And fear forms none of the laws.



ND do you love my river,
My stream of the tawny tones,
And do you find its world, indeed,
The rarest beauty owns?

Oh, I have seen it waken
To welcome home the dawn,
And I have seen its eyelids close
When the veil of night is drawn!

Yea, I have heard its laughter,
Have seen its glorious smile,
And I have felt it leap for joy
And shout for joy the while.

What speed on wind-swept courses,
What races 'gainst the breeze!
What secret pauses, songs and dreams
Under the brooding trees!

The hills clasp hands by its borders,
The forests sing by its side,

While the prairies that rival the ocean's realm
Surge round it far and wide.

It is blood of the vales and the valleys,
It is wine for flower and tree,
It is pulse of the plains, the meadows' veins
And the land's great artery.

I know you love my river—
God grant you know its worth;
For He made it fair beyond compare,
The king of the rivers of earth.


THE MIRROR

THE MIRROR



REFLECTION



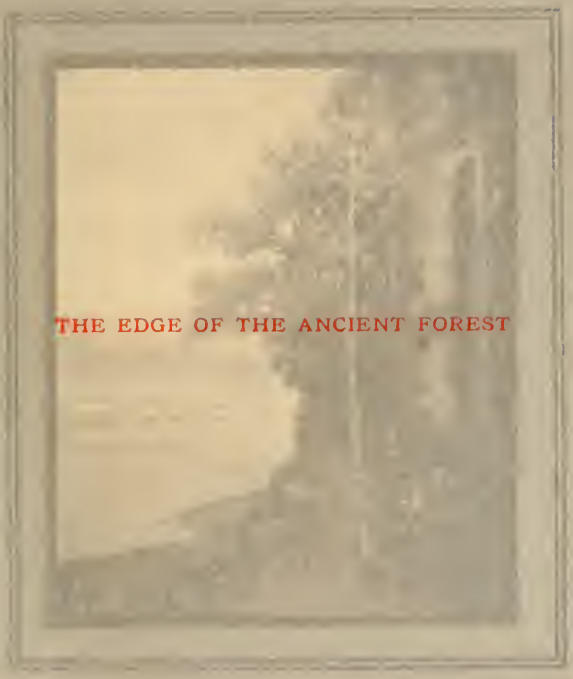
MIRROR, immense and perfect and grand,
Is the river to-day with its frame of land.
The lowlands of grain give a fillet of gold
And the cliffs' steady rise, majestic and bold,
Makes a moulding to harmonize, crown and enclose,
This sunny, reflecting, great stream as it flows.

The breath of the wind no dimness hath made
On the clear, lucent surface, no fingers have laid
In wave touch to shadow or ripple the deep,
And even the current seems fallen asleep,
But out of its depth, in beauty and grace,
Beams the image of heaven's dear, wonderful face.

THE AWAKENING



HIS morn I saw the eastern sky aflame
With sunrise colors, rose and blue and gold.
The mighty river heaven seemed to hold
By just a thread-like breeze, till it became
E'en as a steed whose spirit is made tame
From very force of tenderness. The bold
Dark cliffs were modelled in heroic mold
Against the depths from whence the glory came,
Lavender toned and purple were the hills.
The river waves like opal rose leaves lay,
All scattered by the breeze, until the stream
Grew dappled with the petals' splendor. Thrills
Of joy surged through my heart, and I no day
Shall see to dim the sweetness of this dream.



THE EDGE OF THE ANCIENT FOREST

THE EDGE OF THE ANCIENT FOREST



FATE

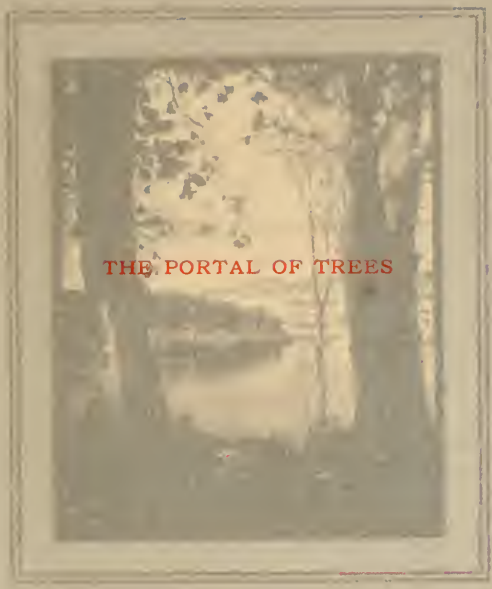


A LITTLE while, and thou shalt say adieu
And leave this sheltered spot that gave thee birth.
A little while, fair tree, and that dear earth,
So tightly held, shall slip like quicksand through
Thy grasp, and thou no more the kiss of dew
Shalt feel; no more the stars thy form shall girth;
Nor shall thy leaves, all radiant with mirth,
Sport in the heavens far within the blue.
The river tempts thee daily with its glass
Of magic and its borrowed gems. It mocks
The very heavens, yea, insidious, late
Or soon, will steal thy last gold grains and pass
With thy weak form into the night. The locks
Of its great den will turn and seal thy fate.

THE FLOOD



ITH tawny colored mane and jaws
blood red,
Down from the northern mountains
bare and cold,
The hungry river comes. A lion
bold
And famished now it seems, and swiftly tread
Its cruel feet to crush the grain. Its head
Swings far from side to side as if 'twould hold
Earth's fairest treasure in its maw. Eyes rolled
To heaven in rage, it roareth o'er the dead.
Many a fertile garden, many a home
In seeming shelter hidden from its sight,
With mothers, fathers, children, safe for years
Far from the thickets where its young cubs roam,
It strikes in fury, plunges into night,
And leaves a wilderness dim with stranger's
tears.



THE PORTAL OF TREES

THE PORTAL OF TREES





O see these lilac bushes all abloom,
O Nature, is enough of joy to fill
The soul—and yet you give, besides, this hill,
So temple like, with great fair trees that plume
Themselves incessantly. Ah, scarcely room
Have I within my heart for this—this still
More lovely thing that doth my being thrill:
The mighty river where the gray cliffs loom!
What pride, great Nature, tempted me to boast
That I had song or color, gifts of art
To speak your glory or to sing your praise?
Yet will you not forgive, since I have most
Of all wished touch of mine might some lone heart
Awake to see your grace and hear your lays?



OON in the western sky,
Low hills, and then the great wide stream,
And tall, dark trees against the gleam
Of star and lighted cloud and evening's gold—
Oh, what, I ask, does the gift of heaven hold
More wonderful, more fair?
And yet, your waving hair,
Catching the glint and glow of burnished rays
That color and illumine with a maze
Of loveliness your brow, your eyes, your lips,
Your throat's deep curve, your hands, your finger tips—
Gives to my picture life and wealth of grace
That lifeless seems without your happy face.


MY SYMPHONY

MY SYMPHONY





T thought of you, my river,
The tears are in my eyes,
And all the restless world is gray
And gray the narrow skies.

I miss the great wide prairies,
The range of sky and space,
And Oh! I miss, far more than all,
The sunlight of your face

That comes as comes the morning,
A glory and delight;
That leads the evening down the world
And haunts the ways of night.

O river, though I tarry
Within the crowded mart,
You have my spirit, river mine,
Your smile has all my heart.



GIVE you, O River, my sheaf of song
To bear on your breast away;
It is half of it broken, and half unspoken,
And all of it thin and gray—
But take it, my River, and bear it along
For a year and a night and a day.

I give you, O River, my wreath of art
To bear on your breast afar;
It is half of it faded, and half unshaded,
And many the faults that mar—
But take it, my River, to hold in your heart
As you hold the Evening star.

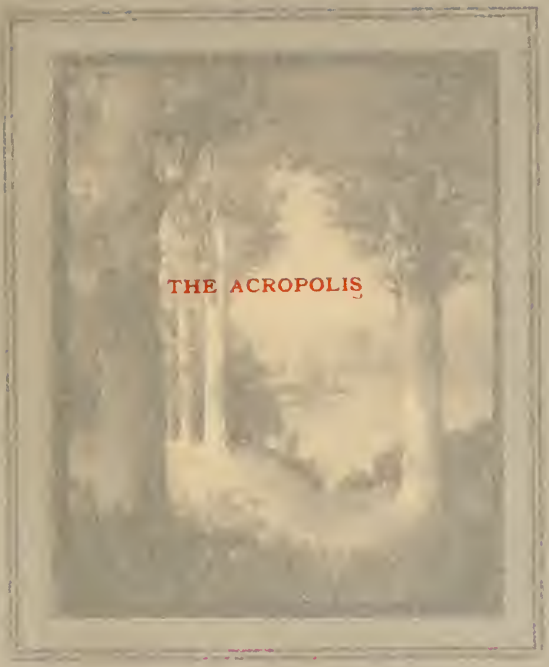
I give you, O River, my crown of years
To bear on your breast for aye;
It is half of it real and half ideal
And all of it passing away—
But take it, my River, though wet with my tears,
A joy at the end of the day.



SONNET is a poet's orchestra
And he the leader, with his wand of rhyme;
Fair words, sweet sounds his great musicians are
And faultlessly they follow him in time;
Now faint and tremulous as breath of Spring
When Winter's frozen tears dissolve in dew—
Now thrilled with soft melodic strains that bring
Visions of happiness and joy; and through
This harmony a deeper chord of love
Gathers and swells from far off worlds unknown,
Rising in great triumphant waves above,
And culminates in one grand, throbbing tone—
Then dies away, as Summer's blooms depart,
Leaving the Autumn richness in the heart.



SENSE of Time and Space and
Worlds afar,
Of friendliness of sea and sunlit
dome,
Of childhood ripples wandering
from home,
Yet never deep enough the scene to mar;
Anon a wave above some hidden bar
Buries in tears the heart that loved to roam,
Then billows headlong plunge into the foam,
Battling to win a gleam of Fame's white star—
Thus, from the ocean of its birth, the soul
Follows the flood-tide's flow and breasts the
world.
A moment's rainbow wreath is held by some,
Yet the ebb-tide claims them all in backward
roll;
Then one last gleam upon a sail unfurled—
A sense of Time and Space and Worlds to come.


THE ACROPOLIS

THE ACROPOLIS





LAS, I cannot paint that wondrous green
Of sun-kissed trees against the distant blue,
Though it has haunted me the summer through!
Each evening, when its glory I have seen
Beyond the veil of space which floats between
Its loveliness and me, I've felt each hue
Stir all my heart; yet, though I constant woo,
It holds its royal reign, a vestal queen.
So beautiful, so subtile and so fair,
So all-sufficient and so calm, shall skill
Or love of mine ne'er lead thee to reveal
The secret of that loveliness? I'll dare
Ten thousand tints, if I at last may thrill
To find my brush speaks all I see and feel!


THE CLOUDS' ARENA

THE CLOUDS' ARENA





OW good it is to watch the wind at play,
High in the heavens and the fields of space!
Now as a runner, eager for the race,
It speeds exultant down the sunlit way;
Or, like a shepherd, seeks the clouds that stray,
The fleecy flocks of clouds that know its face,
And Oh, with what idyllic charm and grace
They sport and frolic, questioning its sway!
Sometimes, a mountaineer, it leaps the crest
Of more than mountain heights of clouds and hurls
An avalanche adown the canyon sky.
At night, perchance, its giant pinions rest—
Or do they cleave their way to other worlds
That in such great profusion crowd the eye?



O brush could ever paint this winter scene—
These twilight trees against the sombre sky,
Lifting their naked branches far on high.
The faded face of Heaven looks between
The leafless limbs through frozen tears, the keen
Wild wind of night that fiercely rushes by
Furrows her brow, while boughs, like wrinkles, lie
Over the cheeks where roses once were seen.
Some mighty etcher, gifted with a line
Swift as the wind, clear cut, and more than sure,
Could here behold a motive strangely grand,
Here feel an impulse born of power divine
Inspire his stroke with something to endure
Beyond the transient labor of the hand!



ERE hath the Word of God an epic made—
Here grouped these stately mountains, range on range.
The prologue is to yonder canyon laid,
Which makes a pause of grandeur, wild and strange.
From crest to crest heroic measures run,
Sired of that Source of rhythm, deep and strong,
Which formed the rhythmic radiance of the sun—
Then break into a thousand peaks of song.
Thought is not born, as yet, that comprehends
The Mind that mouldeth mountains into lines
So grand, so beautiful—that gently bends
The lilies and so kingly rears the pines.
And, when the sunbeams kiss the mountain's brow,
I pause, and deep in admiration bow.


STILL GLIDES THE STREAM

STILL GLIDES THE STREAM



NATURE'S SYMPHONY



OW much of Earth the heavens hold in tune!
How much of Earth reflects what Heaven owns!
The wind's mere breath hath many million tones,
A glance of light from sun or star or moon
Wins every blade of grass. The hills are hewn
Into a thousand shapes that Heaven loans
But for a moment. From its color zones
Infinitudes of tints and shades are strewn.
I hear the lyric of the leaves, the seas'
Wild chantings and the prairies' peaceful song.
The miracle of dawn floods stream and foam
With rose, and paints with wondrous harmonies
Each plume of tree and pearl of spray. Be strong
O heart, and sing that Earth is Heaven and Home!



HAVE contentedly sat hours and
hours
Among the roadside grasses, dumb
with praise.
Contentedly, said I? Yea, if to
gaze
In rapture at a wealth of wild wood flowers
Makes one content. In all this world of ours
A vague unrest disturbs the stream of days,
And no peace lingers in the crowded ways
Drunk with the mad supremacy of powers.

But there is satisfaction and a large
Contentment down among the grasses—kneel
One little moment there, if poet's heart
Be thine, and thou shalt then have secret charge
Of loveliness, and in thy bosom feel
The living springs that feed the founts of art.


LIVE MAN, LIVE STRONG, ANOTHER JUNE IS HERE

LIVE MAN, LIVE STRONG, ANOTHER JUNE IS HERE





HIS is the perfect night of perfect June!
The universal harmony sublime
Is audible. The mighty spheres that climb
The templed heavens and the full-orbed moon
Lead on the starry chorus. Fancy-strewn
With orchestras, the galaxy keeps time,
And rolls, in unison and rhythmic rhyme,
One grand, triumphant, million-chorded tune—
It is Creation's own Messiah, sung
By nature's countless choristers. The notes
Of Mars and of the plaintive Pleiades,
Now low, and now voluminous, are flung
World wide. The music o'er the mountains floats,
And thrills the bosom of the trembling seas.



OD speaks, and lo, a new born world appears!
Fair on the bosom of the universe
Nestles the orbit of its circling years.
Its form, in light both sun and moon immerse
And gently doth it slumber and grow strong.
Oft have I seen a star that seemed a child,
Merry and twinkling with a silvery song;
Oft seen stars maiden-sweet and shy, and wild
Stars bold as youth; then great deep orbs that thrilled
Me with their power. All these to God's least Word
Obedient, move in peace; but man, self-willed,
Forgetting Love doth still his being gird,
Hears but the echo of his shoutings, hurled
Back from the ramparts of his fortressed world.



AJESTIC hill, that bravest every gale,
The courage of a perfect love is thine.
Under thy friendly lea the frightened sail
Watches the storm-girt, wild horizon line
Where hosts of thunder clouds are marshalling.
They hurl the tumult of a world's unrest
Upon thy solitude, in fury fling
The leaping billows round thy ancient breast.
But thou, with steadfast and with noble calm,
Lifting thy head above the mists of fears,
Beholdest flood on flood without alarm.
Heedless thou art of them, as of the years
That wash the footprints of each race from sight
Yet leave thee firm and fearless in thy might.



STOOD beside a pool of clearest calm,
Wherein there was reflected earth and sky;
A picture in the water seemed to lie:
And playfully, not meaning any harm,
I threw a pebble there. In swift alarm
The deep, blue tones repeated from on high
All disappeared, and soon the place where I
Had seen the heavens imaged lost its charm.
In tears I waited there, desiring all
The vanished glory to return again,
It could not be my thoughtlessness would mar
Its beauty and its grace beyond recall;
And even as I waited, even then,
The waters caught and held the first faint star.

APPRECIATION



ORE beautiful to me than any dream
Is this great universe that is my home.
The art of Athens and the craft of Rome,
With all the vast varieties of beam
And arch, of statue, dance and song, I deem
Less wondrous than the charm of heaven's dome,
The ocean's music, traceries of foam,
And shy, wild blossoms by the woodland stream.
Praise be to Him who set the poet's thought
Of rhythm in the soul, and gave to me
The painter's sense of art and loveliness!
Yet oft I feel my very being brought
In touch with some transcendent harmony
That is too fair and holy to express.


THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI

THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI



HOLD that Life hath beauty everywhere,
Awaiting but some faithful heart to thrill.
The play of sunshine round the distant hill,
The folding tender reaches of the air
That harbors every sailing cloud, the fair
Bosom of Earth that nestles close and still
Creature and tree and blossom—these all fill
The soul with joy that nothing can impair.
When light first wreathed the universe, to span
Mountain and main and star-dim depths of space,
Life hallowed it with beauty and with song
To quicken and sustain the hope of man,
Sweeten his faith and give him power to face
The claims of imperfection and be strong.

AN IDEAL



HERE is a voice, alas! too often heard
Among the crowded ways of men, that makes
A discord with eternal things, and breaks
Upon Life's harmony with jarring word.
What answer know we for the song of bird
Or birth of Spring, when lust of riches takes
The light and music from the soul, nor wakes
One chord of joy by which the heart is stirred?
Oh, give me less of wealth, of fame, of skill,
If but the rhythm of the seas and streams
May move me into song; if speech of mine
May win an echo from the wooded hill,
Or tune with stars and mountains—if in dreams
I see a kingdom real and divine!



H, let it not be said of me, dear friends,
That to my heart the outward view of things
Is profitless; that no emotion springs
From Nature's open founts and daily sends
Its rivulets of joy to me—yea, wends
A clear, enchanting, happy stream that sings
Of sights and sounds and secret wonderings,
And in a sea of sweet contentment ends.

I love the world for every ray of light,
For all the gifts and mysteries of air,
For what I feel and fancy forth in dreams;
But, most, I love that inner, deathless sight,
That vision which reveals a sure and fair
Reality, transcending all that seems.


AS THE SOWING THE REAPING

AS THE SOWING THE REAPING



IMMANUEL



CANNOT bear to think the little child
Who walks beside me with the trustful eyes
May sometime be less loving and more wise;
And yet, I know the rosy face that smiled
To-day, and yester-morn amid the wild
Spring grasses laughed in glee, to-morrow's skies
Will cloud, and doubt and shadows will arise
To which his trust cannot be reconciled.

Then pity for the heart in armor clad,
Forced by the world to shield its happiness
Beneath a breast-plate of reserve and pride;
But praise unending if the growing lad,
Spurning hate's helmet, Love's sweet nakedness
Shall choose—and feel God ever by his side!



LIKE the man who has deep faith
in men,
Who has abiding trust in each
and all,
Who doubts not one, nor hesitates
to call
The least or lowliest his brother. Ten,
Yea, and a hundred times he pardons, when,
Forgetful of their higher selves, they fall;
Who leads them, as did David hapless Saul,
Back to the thought of healing Good again.
But, more than this, I like the man who goes
Not songless to the common tasks of life,
But twines a flower round his tools of trade;
Who boasts not what he does nor what he knows;
Who brings no sword but Love to conquer strife,
And, king of self, of nothing is afraid.


THE HOME ROAD

THE HOME ROAD





RIEVE not, dear heart, because thy pathway leads
Along the common hedgerows of the earth,
And simple tasks have been thy lot since birth;
There are strange beauties in the roadside weeds
That wait discovery, and none but needs
Interpreting. 'Tis rash to measure worth
On borrowed scales, for 'mid a seeming dearth
Of opportunities may rise great deeds.
There is no work too small to merit praise,
No gift of love the Infinite disdains;
And oft amid life's simple happenings,
Its humble walks, and half forgotten ways,
The worth of manly effort well sustains
The soul to greatness in God's highest things.



HE sonnet came as comes the honey comb,
A wondrous wealth of nectar-laden cells,
Wherein both Art and Nature's spirit dwells.
Beyond the mountains dim the bee may roam,
Far over seas, above the crested foam,
Or down amid the meadows or the dells;
Yea, through the crowded gates of citadels
May bring the stores of golden sunshine home.
The universe is but a poet's flower,
And 'mid its starry petals manifold
He seeks eternal treasure for his song.
The heritage of one transcendent hour,
The sonnet doth the hoards of ages hold,
While worlds of busy workers round it throng.

VENEZIA



ECKLACE of coral and mosaic, hung
Upon the breast of sweet Italia,
Is sea-born, ocean-clasped Venezia.
Each palace is a pearl whose fame is sung
By deathless bards; each bridge a jewel strung
With liquid threads of gold; each church a star
Some artist crystallized and brought from far
Off worlds of light to glow yet more among
The myriad wonders of the strange lagoons.
Oh, church and bridge and palace, gems of Art
Unique, swift praise and true I give, yet feel
More keenly deep the twilight and the moon's
Caress change these to dreams that thrill my heart,
As night's mysterious charms o'er Venice steal!

QUEEN OF THE ADRIATIC



ITY of three-fold loveliness of night
Is Venice. Star and moon and depth of space
She shares alike with all; yet mark her grace,
As on her bosom fair, a heavenly sight,
She clusters all their glory, matching height
With depth through liquid traceries of lace,
And, softly breathing, bathes her eyes and face
In silvery darkness colorful with light.
Wings of a thousand fancies speed along
The shadowy folds of draperies that hide,
Yet half reveal, her wondrous form; and low
And softly tuned to star and sea, her song
Ripples and rings adown the sleepless tide
With joy which only hearts that dream can know.

AMALFI



ALL, towering cedar trees like ancient spears
Stand guard o'er Cappuccini's convent cells—
Though now no priest within the convent dwells—
And, downward far, Amalfi's face appears
Sunlit, appealing, that at once endears
Itself forever. Color, soft as a shell's
Pearl lustre, in her bosom fair impels
Emotions only satisfied by tears.
And when the moon above the summer sea
Traces a path of glory o'er the deep,
Greeting Amalfi with a soft caress,
And flooding all the world with mystery,
Dead is the heart that shall not proudly weep
For joy, o'er filled with too great happiness.

LAGO DI COMO



OVE-gray and blue and iridescent sheen
Of opal plumage circling neck and breast
Of doves, where color is the loveliest,
Is but a moment's mirror of the green
And sapphire, rose and olive, I have seen
Flooding the mountain range from base to crest
Above Bellagio, that kingliest
Great pearl of splendor, pendant-like between
The beautiful Italian lakes; for all
The notes of full, deep-chorded harmony
Focus their radiance there at sunset. Then,
As evening shadows over Como fall,
They fade into a dream-born memory
Beyond the power of palette or of pen.

ISCHIA



STOOD on Capri's rugged mountain height
And gazed afar upon the azure sea
That charms the sky with its intensity.
The fair Sorrento shore was bathed in light,
And soft and silvery gray with tone that sight
Can scarce perceive, the coast of Napoli
Appeared, a circling arc I'd dimly see,
Then lose, then find again with wild delight.
Once, far beyond the utmost point of shade
That hinted of the headlands, leaving space
For sky and sea to mingle in what seemed
Caress, with form so beautiful it made
My soul rejoice, I saw pale Ischia's face,
Fair as the loveliest world of which I've dreamed.

A NOCTURNE



HE sea in perfect unison of tone
And value with the heavens seemed to-night,
Both as one quiet shadowy depth where light
Lay sleeping; where, revealed to those alone
Who have for beauty pure affection known,
Soft color slumbered, dreaming with delight
Of sunrise planets gaining back their sight
And noontide worlds to fullest vision grown.

Below the Dipper's realm, in downward line
From high Orion, part in ocean, part
In heaven, sang three constellations—first,
Sorrento fair; then Castellemare, fine
As Taurus; then, a feast for mind and heart,
Great Napoli upon the vision burst.

THE MOUNTAINS



HAT joy it is to breathe the mountain air!
Inhale the wondrous fragrance of the pines,
Trace with the eye the rhythmic sweeping lines
Of height that leads to height more nobly fair,
And on to crest and peak that proudly wear
The mantle of the stars. What beauty shines
Down in the valleys of the columbines,
In grace and loveliness beyond compare!
Oh, just to be is here supreme delight!
Just once to feel the sense of being fill
The heart with wonder; realize the strength
And majesty, the tenderness and might
Of that eternal Cause whose love man will
In gladness seek to understand at length!

COROT



LL France is fairer since Corot's warm brush,
Rich with the coloring of twilight time,
Or silvery with dawn, made bloom or blush
Of these, poetic as a poet's rhyme.
He found a rhythm in the hills and trees,
A music in the depths of silent lakes,
A charm in cloud and space, and symphonies
In everything. It is his vision makes
France fairer since he lived, and on her breast
Proudly she wears his colors now. Her heart,
With love all nations well may manifest,
Burns vestal lamps before the shrine of Art
To honor him and cheer with welcoming light
Some new Corot up-struggling through the night.

INNESS



UTUMN returns, but Inness is no more.
His widowed palette, bride of happy years,
Hath laid aside her glorious dress, and o'er
Her form like sackcloth lies the dust. Fall, tears
Of rain, and hide the purple hills in mist!
Weep, oh, ye clouds, and dim the golden trees!
Stilled is the heart of our great colorist
And stilled the hand that caught your harmonies.
Yet, by the gift that speeds the sunbeams through
The sudden storm, that makes the rainbow's birth
A concord sweet of sun and rain till new
And fairer glory fills both heaven and earth,
The beauty Inness wrought shall live, a light
Of joy, through seeming loss to holier sight.



IGHT broods o'er Bethlehem, and faintly, far
Among the mountains, some lost lamb's lone bleat
The silence breaks; and, save one strange, deep star
That shines transcendent, darkness reigns complete.
But look, some light illumines with its gleams
The trembling shepherds and their sheep; it fills
The fields with one vast flood of brilliant beams,
In grand, majestic glory gilds the hills!
Then high o'erhead the hosts of angels sing
Paeans of praise. From mount to mount the waves
Of music roll, and all the heavens ring
With joy; earth echoes to its deepest caves.
All hail, all hail to Christ, the Lord, again!
All hail, and peace on earth, good will to men!

THE ANNUNCIATION



AIR thoughts, more beautiful than flowers, filled
With fragrance Mary's girlhood. Lovingly
She cherished them and felt them grow, and stilled
The winds of earth about them, constantly
Watching and waiting for their promise. Fears
She met with faith, and listened for the Word;
Yet wept, with sun-lit glory through her tears,
When, soft within, the Christ-child song she heard.
Sweet was the prelude of her motherhood,
A music rich with mystery and praise—
Ofttimes its notes she fully understood—
Until the concord of that day of days,
That perfect harmony of Christmas morn,
When unto all the world the King was born.



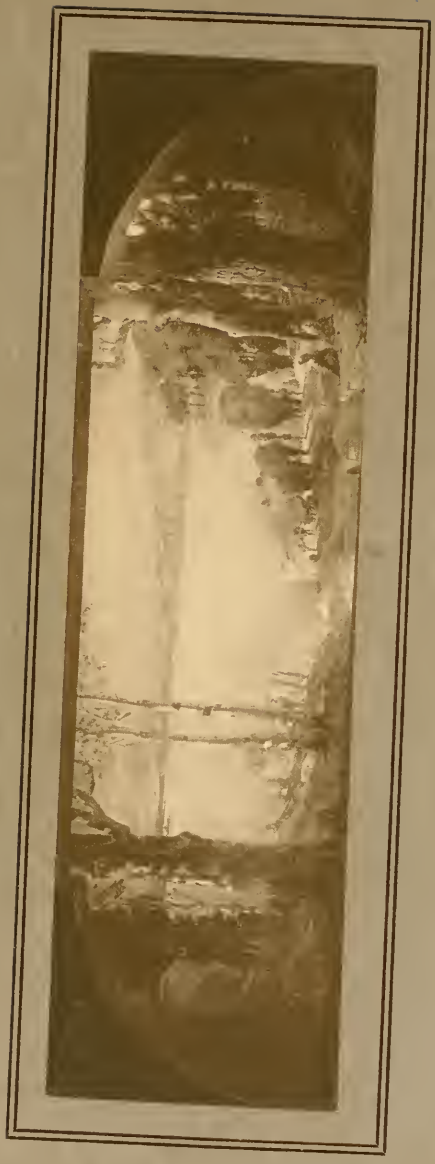
HE Inn is crowded now," the keeper said—
And so, two thousand years ago to-day,
They turned the mother of our Lord away!
Within a manger near, a baby's bed
She made, and for the coming Christ-child's head
She formed a little pillow of the hay.
At dawn she kissed the lips God taught to pray—
Whose prayers healed the sick and raised the dead.
O crowded heart, with all thy worldly guests,
Hast thou a better gift for Christ this morn?
Is there in thee a room unoccupied,
Not filled with self or strife, where no greed rests,
Wherein the Child of Spirit may be born?
Oh, then, rejoice, for God is glorified!



F I could paint and put on canvas all
My dreams of the Madonna's motherhood,
I'd choose the deep, rich tones of some old wood
Of leafy trees as background, like a wall
Of twilit evergreen, and then let fall
Great, golden beams of radiant light which should
Illuminate the Christ-child's form. One could
But love His glorious mission to recall.
Tender as tinted cirrus clouds of rose
I'd touch the virgin's bended head, and gild
A halo round her holy brow. Her face,
In ecstasy, the rapture would disclose
Of love triumphant, and her eyes be filled
With God's sublime divinity and grace.


THE MIGHTY STREAM

THE MIGHTY STREAM





HE rivers of thought are broad and
deep,
The rivers of thought are long,
And the rivers of thought are fair,
indeed,
That flow from the springs of song

For the springs of song are the springs of life,
And right from the heart they rise,
They are crystal clear as the sunbeams are
That range the open skies.

They are crystal clear and flowing free
And filled with joy supreme,
And the only vessel to hold their wine
Is the heart of a golden dream.

The heart of a golden dream will hold
The wonderful wine of song
That gives the soul of the singer strength
And makes the listeners strong.

THE OPEN SECRET



ND would'st thou search, O layman,
The secret springs of art—
Know what the hidden motives are
That stir the artist's heart?

And would'st thou ask the singer
From what sequestered fount
His songs arise, that gird the world
And to the heavens mount?

Would'st know, as well, what power
Launches the poet's rhyme,
And speeds its course beyond the stars
And boundaries of time?

Then ask of the light what magic
It mixes with its beams,
Transforming sky and sea and sward
Into a world of dreams;

Inquire of the wild wood flower
What bids it bend with grace
And perfume all the forest aisles
And clerestories of space;

Implore of the bird what rapture
Pulses its priceless throat
Till its song becomes the herald of Spring,
And the world awakes to its note.

And, should these give thee answer,
Their voice shall seem thine own,
And leap within thee, pure and sweet
As a Word from God's great throne,

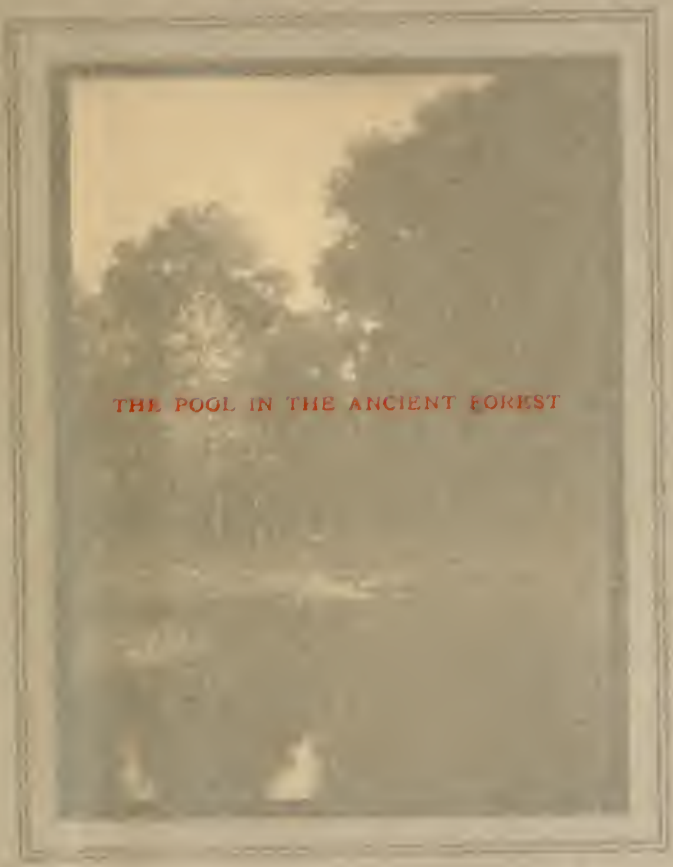
To tell thee every motive
That prompts the human heart
To do its best, for the best it feels
Is rife with the Truth of Art.



THREE clouds there were, the story goes,
Athwart the evening sky;
One was a barque of silver gray,
And one of gold that sailed away,
And one that lifted its sails on high
Was all of a wonderful rose.

Three artists saw, the story goes,
The clouds in the evening sky;
One of them painted the ship of gray,
And one the gold that sailed away,
And one the vision that lifted high
Its sails of wonderful rose.

Three hundred years, the story goes,
Count naught with the evening sky;
But one of the pictures lost its gray,
In one the gold all faded away—
But the one that lifted its sails on high
Is still of a wonderful rose.



THE POOL IN THE ANCIENT FOREST

THE POOL IN THE ANCIENT FOREST





HERE'S a pool in the ancient forest,"
The painter-poet said,
"That is violet-blue and emerald
From the face of the sky o'erhead."

So, far in the ancient forest,
To the heart of the wood went I,
But found no pool of emerald,
No violet-blue for sky.

"There's a pool in the ancient forest,"
Said the painter-poet still,
"That is violet-blue and emerald,
Near the breast of a rose-green hill."

And the heart of the ancient forest
The painter-poet drew,
And painted a pool of emerald
That thrilled me through and through.

Then back to the ancient forest
I went with a strange, wild thrill,
And I found the pool of emerald,
Near the breast of the rose-green hill.



HE gray dusk covers the moorlands wide
To the sky's low rift of rose,
And tears in the dreams of the world abide—
But my heart a sweet song knows,
My heart a sweet song knows.

The gray dusk covers the marsh and the stream
To the sky's low glint of gold,
And tears still flow from the world's mad dream—
But a song in my heart I hold,
A song in my heart I hold.


SOFT TWILIGHT LINGERS

SOFT TWILIGHT LINGERS



STRETCH of darkening water,
And mountains far away,
And over the world the shadow
Of half departing day—

Save one soft cloud of coral,
And a group of sun-kissed trees,
And all of the rest a twilight
Of minor symphonies.

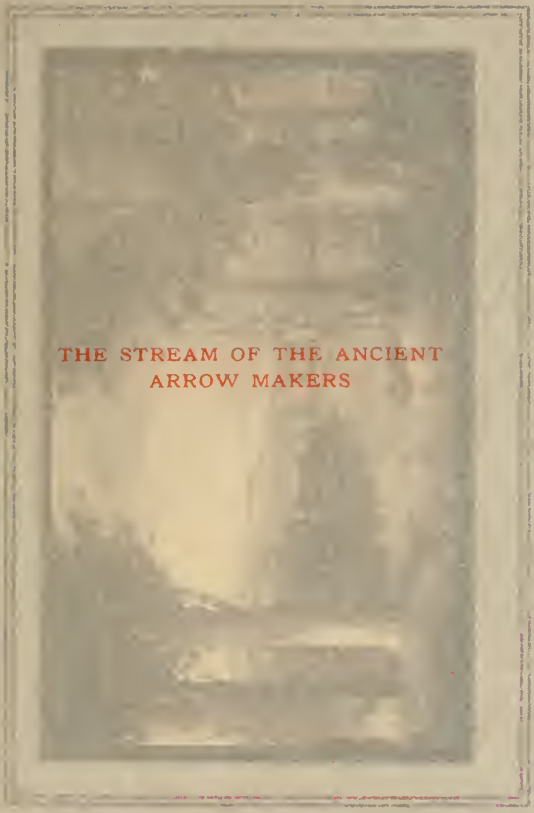
Yet, when the dusk shall deepen
And fill the wells of space,
The little cloud will linger
As the sweetness of a face,

And the sun-kissed trees be golden,
Like a smile within the heart,
As long as the world goes dreaming
And dreams are the life of Art.



HEAR the wind in the pine trees
And the answering song of the cones,
And the thousands of reed-like needles
Scatter its silvery tones.

And the wind goes down the valley
And over the mountain leaps,
But my heart, my heart, forever
The song of the pine tree keeps.


THE STREAM OF THE ANCIENT
ARROW MAKERS

THE STREAM OF THE ANCIENT
ARROW MAKERS





ERE arrows names for all
the trees
That grow along the river,
A dozen shots would soon
exhaust
My modest little quiver.

The arrows are of common use,
Heavy and blunt and olden,
Cedar and oak and pine they are,
But each is winged and golden;

For each doth bend a bow of praise,
Doth leap the stars and capture
The painter's vision of the world
And all the skies' sweet rapture.


THE MIRACLE OF SPRING

THE MIRACLE OF SPRING





HE Southwind merrily passed my home
On its way to the hills beyond—
I heard it call to the sleeping trees
And I heard the trees respond.

They had lain asleep for a month and a day,
For a day and a month and more,
But they caught the call of the Southwind's voice
As it journeyed past my door.

And they answered each with a burst of bloom,
With a ripple of rose and green,
From the heart of the woods the answer came,
A song with a silvery sheen;

From the heart of the woods to the heart of the stream,
A perfumed song and thrill,
As an ecstasy over the fields it went,
As a miracle over the hill.

And the silver sheen was the silvery dress,
And the song was the voice of Spring,
But the wonderful thrill was the heart's delight,
A deep and a glorious thing.

And all of the world and all of its ways,
Its pomp and its ultimate goal,
Are small compared with the heart's great
Spring,
New born in the human soul.



O voice comes over the sea of sound
But the sigh of the surf-swept bar,
No beacon over the shores of sight
But the flickering gleam of a star;
Yet soon Earth's brow will be laurel-
crowned
With the blossomed bough's delight,
And the welcome note from a bird's sweet throat
Throw the wealth of Spring afar.

No dawn comes over the shores of sight
But the face of one in tears,
No voice comes over the sea of sound
But the sorrowful cry of the years;
Yet still we dream of a primal right,
A balm for every wound,
And a glad heart song of a singer strong
To heal the great world's fears.

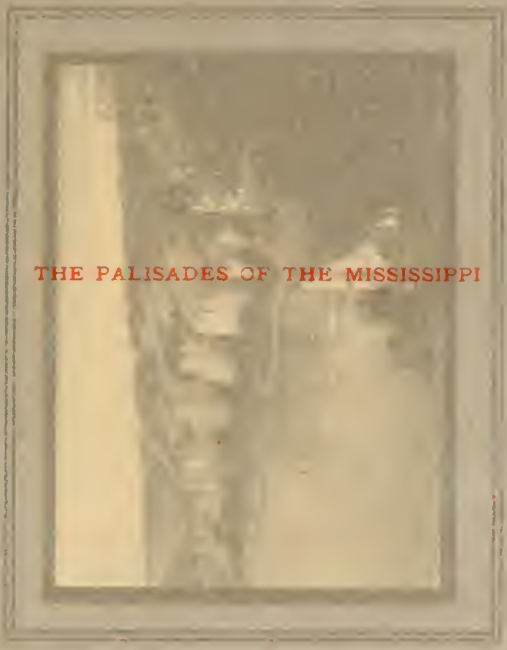


N the heart of an ancient city—
I heard the wise men tell—
Is a stately hall of learning
Where the priests of knowledge
dwell;

And the doors of the world of hearing
And the gates of the world of sight
Are open to him that keepeth
Its altar fires alight.

So I went to the ancient city,
A child I journeyed there,
And the hall of the priests of learning
Was wonderful and fair;

And the gates of the world of seeing
And the doors of the world of sound
Were opened with light and music—
But age in my heart I found.



THE PALISADES OF THE MISSISSIPPI

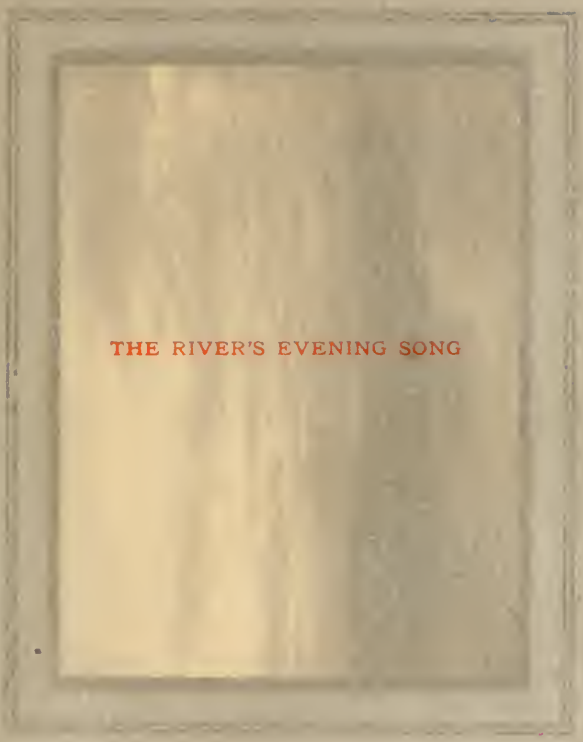
THE PALISADES OF THE MISSISSIPPI





OU cannot turn the portals back,
Nor close the doors of Spring,
For I have felt the zephyr's touch
And down the vernal vistas
heard the north-bound blue-bird
sing!

You cannot Winter's flag unfurl
Above the storm king's towers,
For I have touched Spring's garment's hem
And o'er the trembling mountains
caught the perfume of the flowers!


THE RIVER'S EVENING SONG

THE RIVER'S EVENING SONG





HEN I shall cease to listen
And be alert to see
The miracle of Spring and
dawn,
The blossoming of tree,

And fail at eve to wonder
And watch the circling stars,
The little silver Pleiades,
The ruddy crest of Mars—

When I shall care no longer
To praise the mighty stream,
Or sail the great horizon's course
And linger there and dream—

Then let the thread be broken,
The little golden thread,
For, when no more these thrill my heart,
Myself might well be dead!

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GENERAL EDITION

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